

The Battle Of ALBUERA

16TH MAY 1811

by David Tarragüel

Wellington brought the battle of Fuentes de Oñoro to a successful, if not an entirely satisfactory, conclusion on the evening of May 5th 1811. Earlier that same day, some 130 miles to the south, Beresford began to lay siege to the fortress of Badajoz in what was to be the first of three sieges of the place. No sooner had the preliminary operations got underway than Beresford received news that Soult was on his way from Seville to relieve Badajoz with around 25,000 troops.

On May 13th Beresford marched south with 32,000 British, Portuguese and Spanish troops, the British contingent numbering about 7,000, and on May 15th reached the small town of Albuera. Here he was destined to fight one of the bloodiest and most desperate battles of the war.

At Albuera, Soult tactically outmanoeuvred Beresford, who was handicapped by his soldiers not having the same confidence in him that they normally placed in Wellington, despite Beresford being brave, loyal and talented. After early skirmishing, the French made the most massive single attack of the Peninsular war, when 8,500 men – two full infantry divisions – in an almost solid column with only a light skirmish line preceding it, artillery in support, and left flank protected by 3,500 cavalry, attacked four battalions of Spanish infantry on the Allied southern flank. They had a British division coming up on their right flank, while Colborne's brigade attacked the flank of the column. A sudden storm put muskets out of action, allowing two regiments of Polish lancers to approach unseen and hit one end of the British line. The experienced horsemen in tight formation practically annihilated the first three of Colborne's battalions, before breaking into the rear of the Spaniards to sweep over a battery of K.G.L. guns and almost catch Beresford and his staff. Rallying, the Spanish infantry returned, reinforced by 2 British brigades and the remaining battalion from Colborne's stricken brigade. In a two-deep line, 7 British battalions of 3,700 men now began a close-range firefight with the huge French column, 200 men wide and 40 ranks deep. Over an area about the size of a cricket field, this contest dragged on for nearly an hour.

Torrents of rain brought the battle to an end with the armies remaining in position until late on the following day, when the French retired, covered by their horse artillery and cavalry. Wellington's opinion was that Blake's slowness in guarding against the flank attack was the real cause of all the trouble. Considering the gallant way in which Zayas's four battalions fought, once they were in line, it certainly seems that if thrice the force which that officer was given had been thrown back *en potence* across the heights, as Beresford desired, at the moment that Soult's movement was detected, they would have held their position long enough to be supported by the British. As it was, the reinforcements sent over-late by Blake arrived by dribbles, and gave Zayas little help, falling into a mere tirallade with the French light troops on Zayas's left, instead of engaging in the main battle. After Blake's slowness the main cause of loss was Stewart's haste. Beresford had given orders that the whole 2nd Division was to form up in a second line behind Zayas, and go into action simultaneously, outflanking the massed 5th Corps on either wing. Stewart, combining over-zeal and want of discipline, attacked with the first brigade that came up, while the second and the third were still remote. He also refused to listen to Colborne's request to be allowed to keep a unit in square or column, to protect the flank, and it was the want of this flank-guard which made the charge of the Polish lancers so effective.

In criticizing the operations of the French, the main point which strikes us is that Soult was hesitant and divided in purpose at the crisis of the battle. His attack had been admirable; the movement which threw four-fifths of his available force unexpectedly on to Beresford's flank was beautifully designed and carried out. But when, in the check and pause that followed the incident of Colborne's disaster, he realized (as he himself later admitted) that he had 30,000 men and not 20,000 to fight, and that 'the odds were no longer fair' he should have made up his mind either to withdraw under cover of his splendid cavalry, or else to risk all, and throw his infantry reserves straight into the fight, before the enemy's line was reformed. He did neither, but as he said "giving up his original project, aimed at nothing more than retaining the ground already won." What use was half a mile of hillside to him, if he had failed to break the Allies and drive them off the position which covered the road to Badajoz?. He deserved the beating that he got for this lack of resolve.

The Scenario:

The weather is overcast. The ground is hard. The game's Basic Length is 6 turns.

All woods are soft cover.

Treat all wooden areas as rough terrain

All streams are rough terrain (but at reduced cost for infantry and cavalry of 1-2 i/o 2-3)

The town of Albuera is soft cover and one base.

First level slopes are optional.

*The French player has to decide the entry point in advance. Then, the allied player deploys his forces according to the historical positions (see map). The French player enters at one of the following entry points shown on the map:

A/East side of map on their first pulse of Turn 1.

B/Torres de San Miguel road on their second pulse of Turn 1.

C/Almendral road on their third pulse of Turn 1.

D/Almendral road on their fourth pulse of Turn 1.

*If Turn 1 ends before pulse of arrival, they must enter on the first pulse of Turn 2.

*In all the above cases, the French player may decide to enter in a posterior pulse (never after the end of Turn 2)

*All units must enter map before the end of Turn 2.

*Soult has to enter map with the first entering unit.

*In B,C,D options, forces must enter on road order.

*Regarding Command Points, consider that all units are on map.

*The French player has to spend CP's to enter units from off map.

*The French player has the initiative in the first pulse of Turn 1.

*If any allied army (Spanish or Anglo-Port.) is broken, the other must roll immediately (that same turn) with a modifier of +3 (even if it is unbroken)

The French army is "Fair." Its Break Point is: 6.

The Spanish army is "Fair". Its Break Point is :3

The Anglo-Portuguese army is "Fair". Its Break Point is :4

The French Army

Commander: Mariscal Jean-de-Dieu Soult, Duke of Dalmatia (Good)

This is a Napoleonic Army of 5 Forces.

The French player has 2 generals available.

1st Division Girard (V) 3/6”

1/1 Gereaux	Trained 5SP (SK2)	_____
1/2 Le Compte	Trained 6SP (SK2)	_____
1: 8-pdr foot BTY		_____

2nd Division Gazan 3/6”

2/1 Rochefort	Veteran 7SP(SK2)	_____
2/2 Blum	Trained 4SP (SK2)	_____

3rd Division Werle 3/6”

3/1 Legeres 12eme	Veteran 5SP(SK2)	_____
3/2 Ligne 55eme	Trained 5SP (SK2)	_____
3/3 Ligne 58eme	Trained 5SP (SK2)	_____
3: 8pdr-foot BTY		_____

Godinot Division Godinot 3/6”

G/1 Legeres 16eme	Veteran 5SP (SK2)	_____
G/2 Ligne 51eme	Trained 5SP (SK2)	_____
G/3 Granadiers	Trained 3SP (SK2)	_____

Cavalry Division Latour-Maubourg (V) 1/9” Agressive

CD/1 Briche (Polish lancers)	Elite 4SP	_____
CD/2 Bouvier des Eclat	Trained 3SP	_____
CD/3 Bron	Trained 4SP	_____
CD/4 R.Murat	Trained 4SP	_____
CD: 4-pdr horse A		_____
CD: 4-pdr horse B		_____

The Anglo-Portuguese Army

Commander: William Carr Beresford (Good)

This is a Traditional Army of 4 Forces.

Garrison: Alten's Brigade in Albuera Veteran 4SP _____

2nd Division Stewart 3/6" Agressive

2/1 Colborne Veteran 5SP (SK2) _____
 2/2 Houghton Veteran 5SP (SK2) _____
 2/3 Abercrombie Veteran 5SP (SK2) _____

2: 6-pdr foot BTY _____

4th Division Cole (V) 2/3" Agressive

4/1 Myer Elite 8SP (SK2) _____
 4/2 Harvey (Portuguese Brigade) Trained 7SP (SK1) _____

Portuguese Division Hamilton 3/5"

PD/1 Fonseca Trained 6SP (SK1) _____
 PD/2 Campbell Trained 5SP (SK1) _____
 PD/3 Collins Trained 4SP (SK1) _____
 PD/4 Otteway (Portuguese Cavalry) Trained 3SP _____

PD: 9-pdr foot BTY _____

Cavalry Division Lumley (V) 2/3" Agressive

CD/1 Grey (Heavy Dragoons) Elite 6SP _____
 CD: 6-pdr horse BTY _____

The Spanish Army

Commander: Joaquín Blake (Average)

This is a Traditional Army of 5 Forces.

5th Division Lardizábal 3/3"

5/1 Cansinos-Gouvea Conscript 5SP (SK1) _____

3th Division Ballesteros 4/3" Cautious

3/1 Asensio Conscript 3SP (SK1) _____
 3/2 Carvajal Raw 3SP (SK1) _____

4th Division Zayas (V) 2/5"

4/1 Molina (Spanish Guards) Veteran 5SP (SK1) _____
 4/2 Iglesias Trained 3SP (SK0) _____
 4/3 Fernández Conscript 3SP (SK1) _____

1st Cavalry Division Loy 3/3"

1C/1 Almeida-Avilés (Spanish Cavalry) Conscript 3SP _____

Castaños Division Castaños (V) 2/3"

CD/1 Carlos d'España Conscript 5SP (SK1) _____
 CD/1 Villemur (Spanish Cavalry) Conscript 2SP _____

Alternative Albuera, Play-Balancing, and What-Ifs:

This scenario favors the allies, since Soult's attack was based on the idea that Blake's forces had not joined Beresford's forces the night before and that Beresford had no more than 20,000 men in line opposite him., therefore you can choose the option one if you prefer a more balanced scenario. Any combination may be chosen.

Play-Balancing for the French-Side

1. Blake's forces have not arrive the night before

The Spanish Army is not present in the battlefield except Castaños division forces, that you must include under Beresford command (Update number of forces to 6 and Army's break point to 5 for the Anglo-Portuguese Army)

2. Blake's forces arrive during battle

Apply option 1 as above for the Castaños forces (update number of forces to 4 and Army's break point to 2 for the Spanish Army)

During Command Phase, the allied player rolls a die:

Die roll < Current Turn: Spanish Forces arrive from C and/or D point in road order.

Play-Balancing for the Allied-Side

3. Kemmis' brigade in the battlefield (third brigade of Cole's division)

It was intended that Kemmis should join the army by using a ford below Badajoz, which had been practicable for the last ten days; but on the night of the 15th -16th the water rose, and the brigade was forced to march round by the next passage, that at Jerumenha, which involved a circuit of 30 miles, and made it late for the battle. Only three companies, which chanced to be on the south bank of the Guadiana when the freshet came down, were able to march with Cole and the rest of the division.

Add Kemmis's brigade to Cole's division:

4/3 Kemmis

Veteran 4SP (SK2) _____

Ready-Made Labels for the Albuera Scenario

Jean-de-Dieu Soult, Duke of Dalmatia (Good)

Girard (V) 3/6"

1/1 Gereaux Trained 5 SP (SK2)

1/2 Le Compte Trained 6 SP (SK2)

1: 8-pdr foot BTY

Gazán 3/6"

2/1 Rochefort Veteran 7 SP (SK2)

2/2 Blum Trained 4 SP (SK2)

Werle 3/6"

3/1 Legeres 12eme Veteran 5 SP (SK2)

3/2 Ligne 55eme Trained 5 SP (SK2)

3/3 Ligne 58eme Trained 5 SP (SK2)

3: 8pdr-foot BTY

Godinot 3/6"

G/1 Legeres 16eme Veteran 5 SP (SK2)

G/2 Ligne 51eme Trained 5 SP (SK2)

G/3 Granadiers Trained 3 SP (SK2)

Latour-Maubourg (V) 1/9" Aggressive

CD/1 Briche (Pol.lanc) Elite 4 SP

CD/2 Bouvier des Eclat Trained 3 SP

CD/3 Bron Trained 4 SP

CD/4 R.Murat Trained 4 SP

CD: 4-pdr horse A

CD: 4-pdr horse B

William Carr Beresford (Good)

Alten's Brigade in Albuera Veteran 4SP

Stewart 3/6" Agressive

2/1 Colborne Veteran 5SP (SK2)

2/2 Houghton Veteran 5SP (SK2)

2/3 Abercrombie Veteran 5SP (SK2)

2: 6-pdr foot BTY

Cole (V) 2/3" Agressive

4/1 Myer Elite 8SP (SK2)

4/2 Harvey (Portuguese Brigade) Trained 7SP (SK1)

4/3 Kemmis ** Veteran 4SP (SK2)

Hamilton 3/5"

PD/1 Fonseca Trained 6SP (SK1)

PD/2 Campbell Trained 5SP (SK1)

PD/3 Collins Trained 4SP (SK1)

PD/4 Otteway (Port. Cavalry) Trained 3SP

PD: 9-pdr foot BTY

Lumley (V) 2/3" Agressive

CD/1 Grey (Heavy Dragoons) Elite 6SP (SK2)

CD: 6-pdr horse BTY

Joaquín Blake (Average)**Lardizábal 3/3"**

5/1 Cansinos-Gouvea Conscript 5SP (SK1)

Ballesteros 4/3" Cautious

3/1 Asensio Conscript 3SP (SK1)

3/2 Carvajal Raw 3SP (SK1)

Zayas (V) 2/5"

4/1 Molina (Sp.guards) Veteran 5SP (SK1)

4/2 Iglesias Trained 3SP (SK0)

4/3 Fernández Conscript 3SP (SK1)

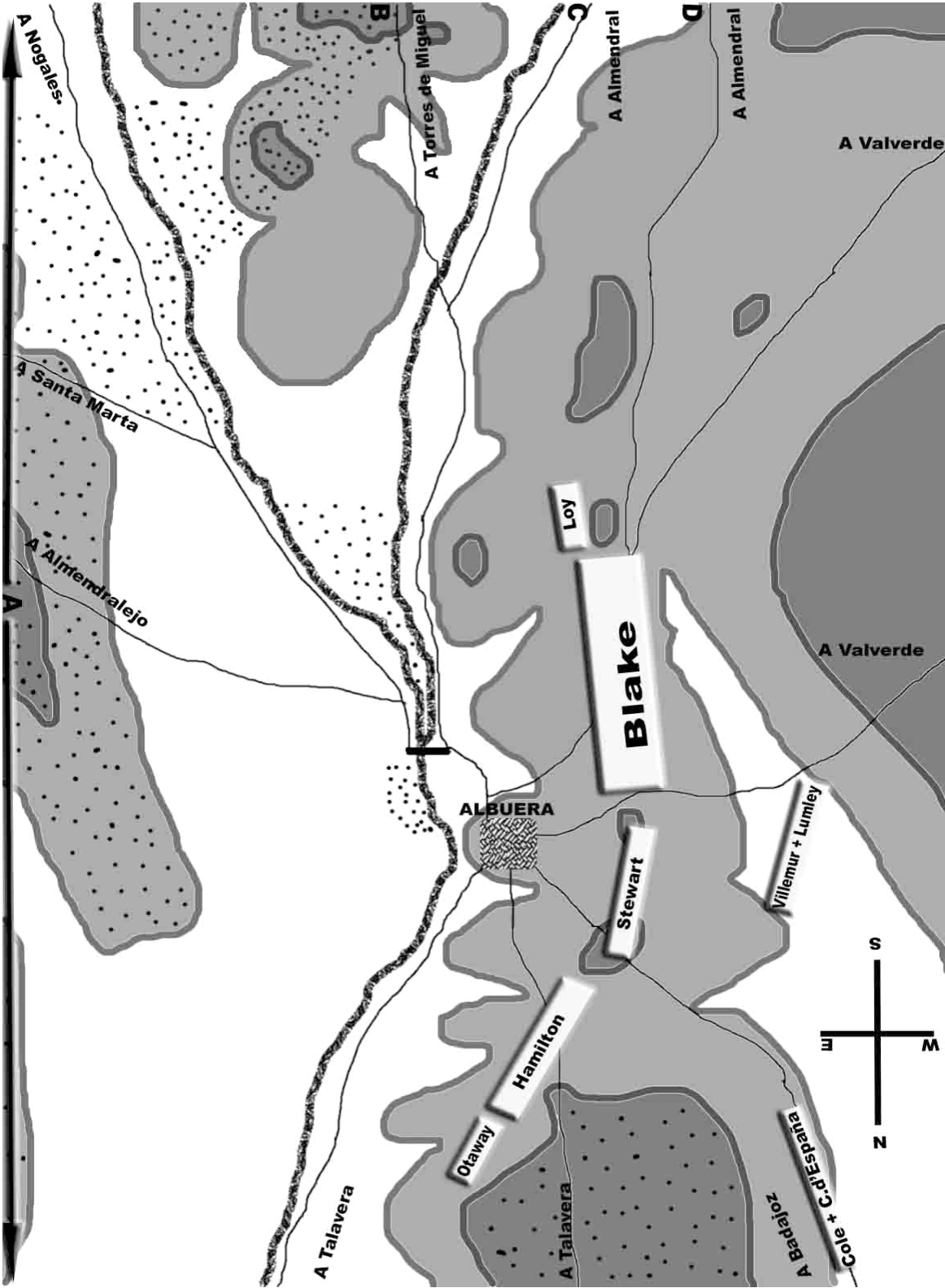
Loy 3/3"

1C/1 Almeida-Avilés Conscript 3SP (SK1)

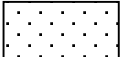
Castañes (V) 2/3"

CD/1 Carlos d'España Conscript 5SP (SK1)

CD/1 Villemur (Spanish Cavalry) Conscript 2SP (SK1)



The Albuera Battlefield: 72" x 48"


Woods